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**I claim:**

1. A method of locating classes in a class path, the method comprising:  
generating a cache of information relating to the classes in the class path;  
requesting a search of the class path; and  
searching the cache to satisfy the requested search.
2. A computer readable medium having instructions stored thereon for  
causing a computer to perform the method of claim 1.
3. The method of claim 1 wherein the class path comprises multiple  
elements, each element having multiple classes stored therein.
4. The method of claim 3 wherein at least one of the elements comprises a  
ZIP file.
5. A method of locating classes in a multi element class path, the method  
comprising:  
generating a search request for desired classes within the multi element  
class path; and  
independently satisfying the request in association with each element in  
the class path, wherein at least one of the elements has a cache of information  
sufficient to satisfy the request for that element.
6. A computer readable medium having instructions stored thereon for  
causing a computer to perform the method of claim 5.
7. The method of claim 5 wherein at least one of the elements comprises a  
ZIP file.
8. The method of claim 5 wherein the classes comprise Java classes.

9. The method of claim 5 wherein at least one of the elements comprises a Java Package Manager.

10. A method of creating caches for selected elements of a class path, the method comprising:

parsing the class path into names of elements;  
determining which elements are viable for caching; and  
initiating creation of caches for those elements which are viable.

11. The method of claim 10 wherein the viability of an element for caching is dependent on the ease of tracking which elements have had changes in them.

12. The method of claim 10 wherein the viability of an element for caching is determined based on it being a predetermined type.

13. The method of claim 10 and further comprising checking a registry to see if the element already has a cache associated with it.

14. The method of claim 13 and further comprising determining if an existing cache is up to date.

15. A class path manager comprising:

means for receiving requests to search a multi element class path for classes;  
means for transferring such requests through a wrapper associated with each element to invoke element specific search methods.

16. The class path manager of claim 15, wherein at least one such element specific search method comprises searching a cache associated with such element.

17. A class path manager for a multi-element class path, the manager comprising:

means for parsing the multi element class path into names of elements;  
means for determining whether each element is a viable cache candidate;  
means for creating a cache for such viable candidates; and  
means for creating indirection wrappers for each element to map class  
searches to each element for independent handling.

18. The class path manager of claim 17 wherein the cache for each viable  
candidate comprises a name of the class.

19. The class path manager of claim 17 wherein the elements are selected  
from the group consisting of directories, ZIP files and Java Package Manager.

20. The class path manager of claim 19 wherein the directories are not  
cached.

21. The class path manager of claim 17 wherein the viability of an element  
for caching is dependent on the ease of tracking which elements have had  
changes in them.

22. A system for finding classes in a multi element class path, the system  
comprising:

- a class path manager that receives requests for identification or  
enumeration of classes in the class path;
- a cache for a cache viable element of the class path;
- a wrapper for such cache viable element that receives such requests from  
the class path manager and that provides a transparent level of indirection to  
services that are specific to such cache viable element.

23. A computer readable medium having instructions stored thereon for  
causing a computer to perform a method of locating classes in a multi element  
class path, the method comprising:

- generating a search request for desired classes within the multi element  
class path; and

independently satisfying the request in association with each element in the class path, wherein at least one of the elements has a cache of information sufficient to satisfy the request for that element, wherein changes to the element result in recreation of the cache.

24. The computer readable medium of claim 23 and further having instructions for causing the computer to perform:

checking a date/time stamp on the element having the cache of information to determine if the cache is up to date